



EarthWatch Rhode Island



Topic: Rhode Island - An Eco-Friendly Travel Destination?

Film Date: Friday, March 14, 2008; Location: Newport Harbor Hotel, Newport

The tourism and hospitality industry is Rhode Island's second-largest industry, supporting 70,179 jobs and more than \$5 billion in spending in 2006. In an effort to reduce the environmental impact of tourists and to support increasingly popular eco- and geo-tourism initiatives, the Rhode Island Department of Environmental Management has established the *Rhode Island Hospitality Green Certification Program*.

The program, offered in partnership with the Rhode Island Hospitality and Tourism Association (RIHTA) and other partners, promotes environmentally responsible practices in the industry through voluntary self-certification. The Department provides training and assistance as well as a workbook with a comprehensive list of sustainable environmental practices such as energy and water conservation, using less toxic products, recycling or composting waste and buying locally grown food. The Department has two workbooks – one for hotel and lodging facilities and one for restaurants.

Using the workbook, each business conducts a self-assessment and receives points for environmental initiatives they undertake. Points range from one to 75 for each item depending on how much the item benefits the environment. For example, one point is awarded for recycling laser toner cartridges and up to 75 points are awarded for installing solar panels or wind turbines to generate electricity. Facilities must earn a minimum of 100 points to become certified. Once certified, the facilities can use the *Rhode Island Hospitality Green Certification* logo on promotional and advertising materials and will be identified as environmentally preferable on the RIHTA, DEM and Tourism websites. For the businesses, it's a way to boost their reputation, save money and demonstrate corporate responsibility. The certification is good for two years after which the facility must increase its total points to be eligible for re-certification. DEM will conduct random audits to verify the self-assessments beginning next year.



The first training session for hotels and lodging took place in February with a number of hotels showing enthusiasm for the program. To date, the Department has received twelve completed workbooks, half of which achieved certification. DEM is working with the others to help them attain the required 100 points. The Department will offer training for restaurants in April. DEM

plans to expand the certification program to the meeting, conference and convention sector and to the supply chain that serves the hospitality industry.

Newport Harbor Hotel and Marina

The Newport Harbor Hotel and Marina, a 133 room facility in Newport, is transforming into an eco-friendly destination. To date, the Hotel has undertaken the following:

- Adopted an environmental policy
- Installed energy efficient lighting throughout the hotel
- Installed an “energy-eye” system that sets back room temperatures when guests leave the room
- Uses green floor cleaning products
- Purchases supplies in bulk to avoid waste
- Recycles as much as possible
- Sends waste vegetable oil to a company that uses it to make bio-diesel fuel
- Uses less toxic paint
- Offers guests the option to not have sheets and towels changed every day in an effort to reduce energy use and detergent waste



The Hotel’s next major initiative is to install water conserving fixtures that could reduce the 5.5 million gallons of water it uses per year by half.

Interviews:

- Michael Sullivan, Director, DEM provided background on the program and why the Department has undertaken the initiative.
- Dale Venturini – President/CEO, RIHTA talked about the benefits to industry
- Jim Corr, Chief Engineer, Newport Harbor Hotel and Marina talked about the green initiatives the hotel has and will undertake.